

A Step Back in Time WALTER BOYSEN

By Joe Tudisco

Sequoyah CC Historical Committee

Sequoyah Country Club has become what it is not only because of the likes of a McGurrin or a Donohue or a Chandler Egan. But also because of the toils of those who have worked daily to maintain and improve the course. Walter Boysen was one of them.

Boysen was Sequoyah's Superintendent from 1933 to 1970. The course underwent drastic changes and developments during his tenure. For example: Arch Horst remembers the changes on the 4th hole, when the slope, which was very steep, had been scooped to a more gradual incline. And on the 10th hole when earth had been moved in atop the crest to enable the green to be moved further back from the crest and to extend the length of the hole. Gary Gomes remembered Boysen adding the bunkers to the 16th and 18th greens. Arch remembers the drastic change in the fairways where, in the summer time, there was much more bounce and roll before Boysen installed automatic irrigation. The new irrigation system allowed more grass to grow (he was the first to install an automatic system on any golf course.)

Boysen strongly advocated and was responsible for fast, sloped greens. The greens were often treacherous during the Oakland Opens held at Sequoyah. (Those fast, sloped greens once caused Sam Snead to say, "I'll never play this damn course again." - And he didn't!) According to Arch, "Boysen was very diligent about course maintenance even to the point of instructing the caddy master to make sure that the caddies repaired all the divots (as they occurred)."

Boysen hired Gary Gomes in 1964 once Gary finished high school. "Boysen," he remembers, "Was always the first on the job, bright and early, because he lived right around the corner. Boysen was great to work for and was always fair to everybody. He showed no favoritism."

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In 2000, Boysen made a visit here and told Terry Grasso he was astonished at the changes resulting from the growth of the redwood trees. Areas that were once creek had become forested in the vicinity of the 10th, 11th, 12th, and the 3rd and 4th holes. The location and size of the maintenance shed also surprised Walt.

Boysen worked as part of the maintenance crew at Orinda CC before he was hired as the “Greenskeeper” at Sequoyah (It was in the 1940’s that the title Golf Course Superintendent was changed from “Greenskeeper”). Boysen graduated from UC Berkeley with a major in Business Administration, a training that served him well for his subsequent activities. He was very active in the Northern California Golf Assn., which is where he first met Clifford A. Wagoner, CGCS.

Cliff and Walter became good friends. They worked together on the Boards of the GCSANC and the GCSAA. They amazingly served on both boards at the same time. Walter was truly a great leader.... He and Cliff developed a program that brought the University of CA Davis and GCSANC together to establish a ‘Turfgrass Adaptive Research Program.’ That resulted in UC Davis establishing turf plots and doing field work on several golf courses. They also were able to establish some classes related to golf courses and a turfgrass intern program. Many of the present golf course superintendents received training from that program. Walter and Cliff were also instrumental in developing a Certification Program at the GCSAA, a program that requires superintendents to continue their education. Walter was President of GCSAA in 1967. And in 1973, was awarded the association’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award. He also was awarded honorary membership in the GCSANC in 1987.

“We have all benefited from Walter’s dedication and leadership,” states Cliff Wagoner, CGCS.

And fortunately, so have we!